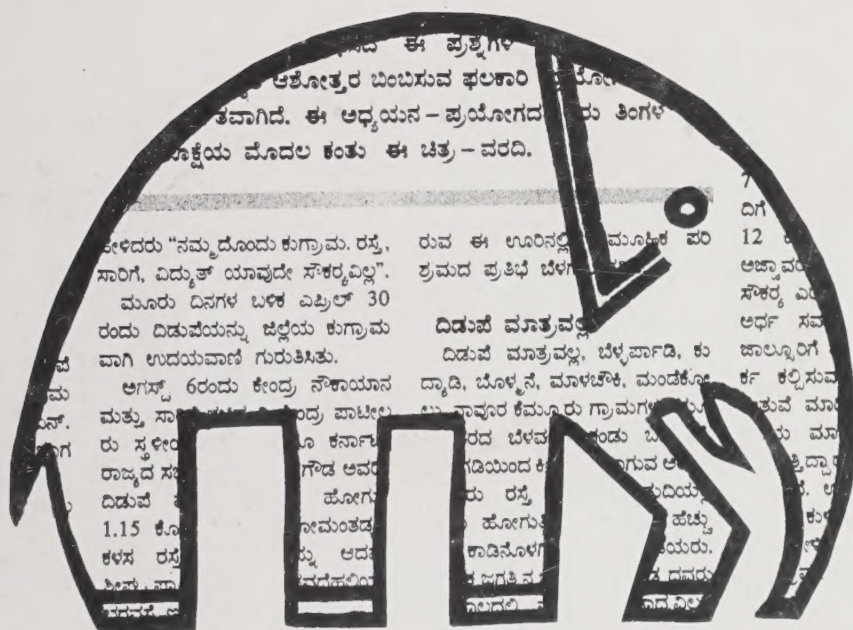


The Eighteenth Elephant

by
ISHWAR DAITOTA
B. P. SANJAY



Udayavani's Experiment in Development Journalism



THE EIGHTEENTH ELEPHANT

UDAYAVANI'S EXPERIMENT IN DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM

by

ISHWAR DAITOTA

B. P. SANJAY

UDAYAVANI

NATIONAL KANNADA DAILY

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KARNATAKA, INDIA

THE EIGHTEENTH ELEPHANT: A document on Udayavani's "Identify Backward Villages Experiment" (IBVE) in development journalism by Ishwar Daitota and B. P. Sanjay

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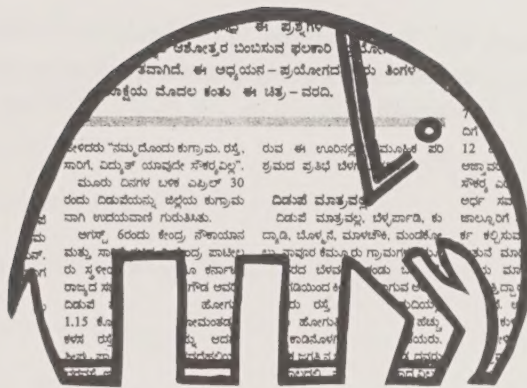
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The Eighteenth Elephant
is dedicated to
the readers of
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Preface

This is an illustration of the role of a newspaper in Development. Conventionally, it is believed that the print medium owing to problems of illiteracy etc., has a limited reach.

Our basic assumption is that outside help cannot bring about desired change. Change could be brought about only when an awareness is created amongst the people about their problems and aspirations.

Lack of proper communication has kept the community spirit lying dormant in many Indian villages. The gap between the villagers and the urban rulers, coupled with the difficult economic situation has created an anxiety and distress in them.

“Kugrama Guruthisi” or “Identify Backward Villages Experiment” (IBVE) of Udayavani was originally conceived as a study of the impact of the central and state governmental efforts of development in rural India, with a particular reference to Dakshina Kannada. Our intention was to know how far the governmental programmes have reached the people for whom they were planned. But, because of the positive response from the public, it turned out to be an attempt to initiate the process of improving the quality of life in the underdeveloped areas of our publications circulation. The success story of Manipal, achieved through local initiative and by the great visions of its founder Dr. T. M. A. Pai, itself was the backdrop for the experiment.

A major achievement of the experiment was the availability of good roads to reach many of the backward villages, followed by other essential facilities. It was made possible by the responsive villagers and sensitised governmental machinery, while the local initiative and voluntary efforts were the cost paid for it.

A good road can always extend a vital service; medicare to the villagers, in addition to marketing of agricultural and other produce of the villages. It was not a surprise when many a villagers identified road as their primary demand for development, during the course of our investigations. They knew very well that a good approach road would naturally provide them with an access to other facilities.

Udayavani was only a catalyst in the development process of these villages. It played the role of the Eighteenth Elephant (Fable of the Eighteenth Elephant is given in page xi) making its presence

felt, only to help the villagers to find out their own solutions to their problems.

Since, our experience was very encouraging during the experiment years (1981–84), later, we decided to extend similar coverage to similar villages and continue to facilitate the development of the region.

Today, stories of, and from any backward village get priority for coverage in our paper.

Mr. Ishwar Daitota, the project co-ordinator, who is also Udayavani's Bureau Chief in Bangalore, has diligently monitored and documented the progress of the project over the years. This publication is a description of "IBVE" based on the observation and study of the project by him and Dr. B. P. Sanjay, a teacher in the Dept. of Mass Communication at Madras University. It was prepared in 1985 at the time of launching of our second Identify Backward Villages Scheme. However, we are publishing it now, to mark the completion of Udayavani's 20 years of service and beginning of the third Backward Villages Project.

Manipal
March, 1990

T. Mohandas Pai
Managing Director

Foreword

I was born and brought up in a remote village in Dakshina Kannada, (D.K.) a district in Karnataka, South India. My village lacked basic facilities and amenities. Myself and my younger sister had to walk for 45 minutes to reach our school in the neighbouring village, like my older brothers and sisters did. This was a daunting exercise during the summer months and more so during the monsoon. My parents belief in education and their encouragement gave us education. Otherwise we would have been like so many other illiterates in the village and the nation.

I recall distantly how my aunt died without proper medical facilities. The Doctor was able to reach our village home the next morning only to pronounce my aunt's death.

Those were the days, I wished that my house was near a town with all the facilities to make our life easier.

After my education and training in journalism, I began a career in a leading daily of the region and concentrated on all the usual stories and features. In 1980, upon my return from a Press Foundation of Asia sponsored course on Development Journalism, the Managing Director of Udayavani, Mr. Mohandas Pai discussed with me some of the basic problems of the villages and explored the idea of Udayavani undertaking a study in this regard. The MD's suggestion took me back to those early days when these problems were a reality and I accepted the task. Thus began our project on Development Journalism and is now well known as the Udayavani's Identify Backward Villages Experiment.

The PFA course had laid the foundation for a broader understanding of development problems and what a newspaper could do. When the three year experiment was complete, it reiterated my conviction about the role of local initiative in bringing about desired changes.

The main tasks of a journalist are to inform, interpret and entertain. Where as a development journalist has a fourth dimension to his work, i.e. to promote, which is positive and purposive. He has to get his readers realise how serious the development problem is and open their eyes to possible solutions.

Yes, that is a theory I learnt. I saw this happening and that the people were reacting.

Today my village has all the facilities brought by local initiative and hard work. Four buses run through the village sixteen times a day, four doctors have settled in the village in addition to a Government Primary Health Centre. A High School and two bank branches, a full-fledged Post Office and a 50 line telephone exchange serve the people.

Availability of infrastructural facilities is not everything. But once they are provided, they are there for people to use it. This experiment has given me personal satisfaction as these facilities are now being extended to other villages in the region. It is further gratifying to note that simple stories of rural folk, their struggles and achievements, aspirations and frustrations are finding their way into the newspaper columns not only in Udayavani but many other papers.

The developments in my village convinced me the need for local initiative in the development process. As a journalist I have recorded my experiences in these villages extensively. Sanjay's academic interest in this experiment resulted in our collaboration to record the experiment in detail for further discussion and analysis.

This study involved discussions and meeting with individuals associated with the experiment and field visits to all the identified villages. It traces the experiment from concept to implementation.

I hope that it serves as a reference material for scholars and others interested in development journalism.

Ishwar Daitota

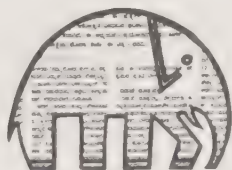
Project Co-ordinator

Fable of The Eighteenth Elephant

“While on his death bed, an aging father called his sons together to tell them how to divide his wealth. Soon after their father’s death, the sons gathered to share this property, primarily their father’s seventeen elephants. The father’s instructions was that the eldest son should receive half of the elephants, while the middle son would get one-third, and the youngest, one-ninth.

Discovering that half of seventeen left him with eight and a half elephants, the eldest son tried to persuade his brothers that he should receive nine elephants. The youngest brother realizing that one-ninth of seventeen left him with four-fifth of an elephant argued that since he was already receiving so little, he should get two elephants. As the middle son began to plead his case; they reached a deadlock and began fighting.

While they fought over the fate of the last elephant, the king of the region came riding on a caparisoned elephant. “Why do you look so troubled?” he asked the brothers. On hearing their problem, dismounting from his elephant, he said, “Take my elephant.” Before they could consider the offer, he had joined his elephant with the herd. Now there were eighteen elephants. The king asked the brothers to take their respective share. The eldest son took half of the eighteen elephants—nine; the middle son, one-third—six; and the youngest son, one-ninth—two. Now that the brothers had got their proper share, the king wished them well, mounted his elephant and rode away. Nine plus six plus two equals seventeen.”



Ishwar Daitota, the co-ordinator of the project used to recite this story to the villagers in the backward villages emphasizing that Udayavani can only play the role of the Eighteenth Elephant in the development process.



Backward villages of Dakshina Kannada against India in the inset.

Introduction

The Problem : Many development schemes have been initiated and implemented in this country since Independence. These schemes are sponsored both by the State and the Central governments.¹

The question that is often raised is of the impact of these schemes on the living conditions of the people, particularly in the rural areas. Development literature abounds in references to the wide gap between the promise and performance of various developmental schemes. In order to reduce or eliminate this gap, the people have to realise the nature of the problems and various means of overcoming them.

Media in the Third World countries are expected and have to play a major role in these tasks. How did one newspaper in India realise and contribute to this process is an interesting study. This document describes one and perhaps the only experiment undertaken by a media institution in a Third World Context.

1. The Indian Administrative set-up follows a federal model where developmental schemes are allocated to Central and State governments depending upon the nature and jurisdiction of the schemes.

Udayavani is a Kannada daily published from Manipal.² After ten years of service, it decided to undertake a novel experiment in development journalism, "Identify Backward Villages Experiment" (IBVE).

Genesis : IBVE could be traced to an observation made by the Managing Director, Mr. T. Mohandas Pai to the Project Co-ordinator, Mr. Ishwar Daitota, on a newspaper report highlighting the fact that many of the developmental schemes intended for the people do not reach them.³ He pondered whether any study could be initiated in this regard. The co-ordinator, who had undergone an advanced training programme in development journalism at the Press Foundation of Asia, Manila (Philippines), was enthusiastic to take up the study. Initially the study was proposed as an one time investigation only. Readers' involvement was considered integral to the investigation and accordingly a notification was issued in the newspaper. The readers' response was so overwhelming that the study became a continuous exercise in development journalism.

The Experiment : On January 2, 1981, Udayavani carried an advertisement detailing the objectives of the experiment and inviting nominations from its readers:

Udayavani has taken up a novel scheme to identify a backward village (Kugrama) for studying the impact of numerous Central and State government sponsored schemes since Independence. Readers' involvement is of paramount importance. They are encouraged to identify two backward villages, one in their Taluka and one in the District. To help you a proforma listing the ten basic infrastructural facilities has been provided. These

2. Established in 1970, Udayavani has three sister publications. It is one of the four major newspapers of Karnataka State. On an average, it publishes 12 pages daily and 16-20 pages on the weekends. Udayavani defies the logic that a newspaper in India can succeed only if it is published from a major urban centre. Its success has depended a lot on many innovative schemes involving the readers. It was also one of the first newspapers in India to go in for offset printing and has won numerous state and national awards for designing and excellence in printing. Manipal, from where Udayavani is published is a campus town 70 kms from Mangalore, the district headquarters of Dakshina Kannada. With a meagre population of 7,000, the township claims a leading status in banking, industry, education and enterprise in Karnataka, a southern state of India.

3. Authors' interview with the MD on 13-5-1984.

facilities have been identified based on Government of India census report.⁴

The facilities listed in the advertisement to decide the backwardness of the villages were primary school, middle school, electricity, post office, telephone, doctor, hospital, drinking water, road and bus service.

The advertisement also carried the details of a prize scheme under which a reader identifying the most backward village was entitled to get a cash prize. The last date for sending nominations was fixed to give sufficient time for the readers to conduct their own surveys. The advertisement was repeated thrice before the last date.

The Selection : Although 35 days time was given to the readers for sending their nominations, the co-ordinator decided to wait for another 15 days as grace period before taking up the readers' nominations for follow-up action.

465 readers had sent in their nominations identifying 417 villages and hamlets in the District as backward. An analysis of the readers' responses in terms of their occupation revealed that students were actively involved in providing information about the backward villages. As many as 107 students responded followed by farmers, unemployed, businessmen and labourers. Nearly 13% of them were women. The age group of the respondents ranged from 12 to 80.

Readers from all over Karnataka and even abroad had sent their nominations.⁵

However, keeping in view the scope and nature of the Experiment, nominations from the eight talukas in the District only were considered for further study. The talukawise break-up of the readers' response to the newspaper advertisement is given in table 1.

The readers' responses were analysed with a view to select the most backward village in the District. In all 460 readers had identified 417 villages and hamlets spread over eight talukas. At the next stage of selection, it was decided to involve the legislators, as they constitute an important factor and link in the development process.⁶ 15 legislators

4. Translation or the introduction to the advertisement.

5. Udayavani's readership spreads all over Karnataka and a few places in the neighbouring states such as Kerala and Maharashtra. It also has subscribers abroad, mainly in the Middle Eastern countries.

6. The MD explained this in the interview on 13-5-1984: "As Legislators constitute a vital link in the development process, it was decided to involve them in the identification process."

Table 1: Talukawise Break-up of readers responses.

Taluka	Readers' responses
Belthangady	92
Bantwal	49
Karkala	58
Kundapura	66
Mangalore	39
Puttur	46
Sullia	43
Udupi	67
Total	460*

* five nominations were received for villages outside the District and have not been included.

represent the District in the 224 member state legislative assembly. Since the legislators represent the various electoral constituencies covering the entire District and are aware of the developmental problems, they were asked to select 10 villages in their respective constituencies. This short list was circulated to the respective taluka officials with a request to choose three or four villages under their jurisdiction by checking their official records. The list provided by these officials was compared with the Census reports and a list of 30 villages was prepared.

The co-ordinator then embarked on a visit to these villages recording and cross checking the information provided by the readers, legislators and the officials. This visit which involved riding through more than 1900 kms, very often in difficult terrain, gave an opportunity to understand the problems arising out of lack of or inadequate infrastructural facilities.⁷ At the end of the 17 day visit, the co-ordinator had arrived at his choice of the most backward village in the District.

7. See Udayavani Page 2 on 29-4-1981.

Table 2

The Backward Villages

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Alanthaya | 6. Kudyady |
| 2. Bellarpady | 7. Malachowki |
| 3. Bolmane | 8. Mandekolu |
| 4. Didupe | 9. Manila |
| 5. Kemtoor* | 10. Navoora |

* Adopted by Vijaya Bank, Kukkikatte Branch, Udupi



A dwelling unit in Didiupe which abounds in nature.

Backward Villages: An Insight

Detailed investigations of the problems of the backward villages by the co-ordinator revealed that communications, medical facilities and poor schooling were the major problems in addition to inadequate extension facilities in agriculture, health and industry. These problems were accentuated by political and economic factors that have significantly affected the development process. Based on an analysis of the newspaper reports that were published in Udayavani and a follow-up visit to all the backward villages, this chapter will provide an insight into the conditions that existed before the experiment began.

The proforma that was published in the newspaper to help the readers had identified all the basic infrastructural facilities essential for development process. It was found that Dakshina Kannada did not have any backward village that lacked all the infrastructural

facilities.⁸ However it does not mean that the existing facilities can cater to the problems.

Non-availability of potable water was a common problem to all the backward villages. The sources of water supply were seasonal and the natural water tanks were not maintained in a clean and safe manner. Mosquito menace, frequent malarial attacks, diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases were quite common. Since these villages lacked even a skeletal medical facility, the patients had to be taken to nearby towns for medical attention. Lack of proper roads and the relative isolation of these villages made it difficult to cater to emergency medical relief. For example, in Didupe, patients had to be wrapped in gunny bags and physically carried over a distance of 11 kms before they could reach an approach road for any kind of transport facility.

Roads and transportation facilities were more acute in what could be described as 'island villages.'⁹ For example *Jarkala Mundli* was a typical island village. This village lies on the banks of the Suvarna river adjoining the foothills of Western Ghats. A circuitous road provided access to transportation at a distance of seven kms from this village. However, on the opposite bank of the river, at a distance of only three kms, there were such facilities available. Yet for want of a bridge, the villagers were completely cut-off from the other bank. Since the State Government had decided to undertake a water works project in the region, no developmental project benefitting the village had been taken up on the assumption that with the completion of the project, the village would be submerged and therefore resources could not be allocated. However, neither the project was completed nor the approach facility was created¹⁰

-
8. This does not mean that all the villages/hamlets in DK have some of these facilities. Since a minimum population was a criterion for identifying the backward village, many of the hamlets having less than 500 people were not considered. The co-ordinator visited many of these hamlets and found that apart from a single teacher school, there was no other facility. Explanation offered by the co-ordinator in Udayavani, April 1981.
 9. Island village is a local term used to describe villages which get surrounded by water during monsoon season which lasts for four to six months with an average rainfall of 300 cms. In some villages owing to erection of dams/reservoirs, water surrounds the village throughout the year necessitating the construction of bridges to facilitate access to basic facilities.
 10. This was the situation then and continues to be so even now.



Syndicate Bank DGM, Mr. H. D. S. Pai, Divisional Manager, Mr. K. M. Udupa, Mrs. Vasanthi A. Pai, Chairperson, T.A. Pai Rural Development Institute, Manipal and other Bank and Government Officials on their way to Bellarpady, an "Island Village".

Bellarpady faced similar problem. In *Jarkala*, the villagers could at least walk across the river bed during the dry season whereas in *Bellarpady* the villagers were unable to do this as the commissioning of a water works project to the nearby town, *Udupi*, maintained a high water level throughout the year. A major problem under these circumstances was the lack of a bridge connecting the village to the nearby town.¹¹

Education: The directive principles of the Constitution of India envisage the provision of educational facilities to all the children below the age of 14 years. This goal is yet to be achieved and the problems remain. Even in the villages where schools have been established there is no guarantee that the cherished ideals of the Constitution have been achieved.

11. A major bridge is under construction now at the site.

In cases where the schools did not function, no attempt had been made to find out the reasons and set them right. A common feature of these villages was that they had a literacy figure much lower than the District average.¹²

There were associated problems for the low literacy in the backward villages. For example, in the only single teacher school of *Alanthaya*, there was a constant problem of the teacher being absent for months together. When the only teacher was busy seeking his transfer, the school doors remained closed. Finally the Educational authorities posted him elsewhere and replaced him with a lady teacher. Since she did not like working in a village, far away from her own, she applied for long leave and left the village. Once again, the school doors were closed

In *Manila* there were two higher primary schools and one of them was partially functioning. This school with seven classes had only four teachers: a couple; a teacher with farming interests and a craft teacher. In the case of the couple, they shared their responsibility at home and school on a rotation basis ensuring good attention only for their children. The farmer teacher was busy at his farm away from the school. Thus only the craft teacher was the moulder of the future generation of *Manila*. This was the major complaint of the villagers and beyond that they were helpless. The student strength of the school was coming down year by year. Those who could not afford to send their children to another school did not have any choice.¹³

These were the serious problems faced by all the backward villages. A profile of the most backward village, *Didupe* will illustrate the situation in greater detail. This profile is based on the supplement on *Didupe* published in Udayavani on 30-4-1981.

-
12. The District average was 53.4% as per 1981 census, which was much higher than the National and State average of around 38%. In the backward villages, the literacy rate was around 30%. Only in one village, *Mandekolu*, it was 35%.
 13. The Post Master of Manila village expressed his concern over the fate of the school children in a published interview.

Nature's Abode Sans Communication

Nestled in the foot-hill of the Western Ghats, *Didupe* has a population of 1300 with only 29.1 % literacy. The only link that this village has with the outside world is a 'kucha' path that cuts through the dense forest surrounding the village....

At first glance, it appears that there are not many houses in the village. Houses are scattered around the slopes embedded deep inside the forest.... An arrack shop and a grocery shop constitute the bazaar area of Didupe....

The primary school in Didupe has 220 students, some from the village and a few from neighbouring hamlets.... However, the location of the school is such that these students have to walk long distances in dense forest and cut across many a streams to reach the school.... Even these dangerous and unsafe paths are virtually non-existent during monsoon and the parents do not want to take any risks.... To avoid this, some families who can afford send their children to boarding schools in the towns....



A school boy braves his way on a risky foot-bridge over a deep stream.

Lack of Medical and Health care facilities is another major problem. The nearest village where a doctor visits periodically is *Killur* at a distance of 11 kms. The doctor at *Killur* and also other doctors from the taluka centre are reluctant to visit *Didupe*, especially during the monsoon. The villagers have no other option, but to go to *Killur* or taluka centre, *Belthangady*, for medical relief.... In case of an emergency the patient is transferred to the hospital/clinic, wrapped in a gunny bag....

Byrajja, a nonagenarian in *Didupe* is unhappy that his only grandson, Choma, has gone wayward and feels that he should get proper education. Byrajja attributes his grandson's disinterest in attending school to the difficulties in reaching the school.... A simple solution according to Byrajja is a road and a provision of bus facility. His desire to get these facilities for the village became evident when he offered to contribute Rs.100/- as donation towards the construction costs of the road. He was even willing to sign a pledge for the purpose....

The problems through the eyes of the Villagers :

The villagers, particularly the youth, attended a meeting convened by the Block Development Officer (BDO) to discuss the developmental priorities. After the co-ordinator explained the purpose of the IBVE and narrated the *fable of the eighteenth elephant*, they started expressing their views and woes.

Though there was a consensus that it was the villagers who should take the initiative and resolve their developmental problems, many realities became evident. The village had been repeatedly promised of a road, beginning with the general promise of the State Government on the eve of the silver jubilee of its formation. An attempt by a few villagers to build a road through voluntary labour had fizzled out when they realised the difficulty of maintaining it year after year after each monsoon. “No proper road to commute, no doctors to attend to our illnesses, and no community centre for our activities”, was their discontentment. Lack of cultural activities and the discontinuation of the important Ganesh festival and the school anniversary functions were the other disappointments....

At the community meeting, it was clear that the villagers had realised their problems and were also under the impression that the mere publication of these stories would lead to a solution to their problems.

Udayavani's role in the IBVE :

Although the villagers felt that mere publication of stories in the newspaper would bring about a solution to their problems, the co-ordinator had made it clear through the *fable of the eighteenth elephant* that the newspaper could only act as a facilitator and catalyst for development.

The Coverage

The experiment that was originally intended to be a small study transformed into a three year project owing to the role and response of various institutions, individuals and the villagers involved in the development process.

The common perception that newspaper can by itself bring about development is not valid. Udayavani was quite clear about its role in the development process. Accordingly it adopted a coverage policy to highlight the problems and to sensitise the people for solving their problems. In this chapter, an analysis of the stories regarding backward villages will be presented based on actual review of all the stories that were published in the newspaper during the three year IBVE.

In the first year of the experiment, all the problems and the activities of the villages were extensively and regularly covered by

the newspaper. It was a coverage of the development process with an emphasis on interpretation of the problems and the co-ordinator was regularly visiting these villages. During the second year, the coverage was restricted to happenings and occasional success stories. In the third year there was no coverage to any of the backward villages and all activities were ignored for publication. However, Udayavani kept a continuous contact with the villages through personal contacts and reports from the field assistants manning the farm clinics. An interesting feature of this reporting process was that the field assistants had gradually transformed into good grass root correspondents for the newspaper.

Another interesting feature of the coverage was that the articles and especially photographs concentrated on the ordinary folks and not on the rural elite or political leaders. Byrajja, the illiterate old man of *Didupe* became a hero of his village and the talk of the readers. Maila, the first villager from *Mandekolu* to ride the bus to his village was easily recognised in the town centre after a photo story on him appeared in the newspaper. It was no surprise that both these ordinary men were unanimously chosen by the college students to inaugurate their National Service Scheme (NSS) camps in the backward villages.

The coverage was not exclusive nor was there any regular column or a week day reserved for it. It was an integrated coverage. All the available columns and formats were used: front page stories; photo-features; readers write and complaint columns; in addition to double page supplements. The coverage also included success and model stories from outside these villages meant for motivating the villagers to participate in the development process.

The content analysis done (using standardised techniques developed for the purpose) in order to find out the extent of coverage for the backward villages confirms the pattern. See table 3 for details of coverage.

The Response

The publication of the first supplement on April 30, 1981, was timed to coincide with the birthday of Dr. T. M. A. Pai, founder of Udayavani and Manipal.¹⁴ This supplement highlighting the problems of the backward villages evoked significant response and reaction from institutions and individuals of the region. The

14. Dr. T. M. A. Pai was instrumental in the transformation of Manipal from a barren piece of dry land to a nerve centre of economic and education activities. Soon after completing his graduate studies in Medicine, he had plans to settle in Hong Kong, where there was scope for doctors. With this in mind, when he went to seek permission and blessings from his mother, she said: "Look for a thing in a place where it is lost and work to serve the place where you were born (Biddalli huduka beku, iddalli dudiya beku). Her wisdom made Dr. Pai to give up his plans to go abroad and he resolved to work for his native place. With his dynamism and earnestness, he converted the rocky hillock. "Mannupalla" (a name derived from the adjoining brick fields) into one of the most modern townships. Manipal is just under four decades old. His success story was no doubt a model for many others to follow. The paper chose his birthday to initiate the IBVE with a view to drive home this message."

nationalised Syndicate Bank, the lead bank of the District was quick to respond. "We cannot be blind anymore", was the instant reaction of Mr. H. D. S. Pai, Dy. General Manager, Western Zone, when he read in the morning paper that there were villages without minimum facilities in his lead District.

He contacted the MD of Udayavani and discussed the possibility of the Bank adopting at least one of the backward villages. Such adoption was however discouraged by the newspaper, as village adoption schemes in the past had not brought about desired changes. As a sequel to this conversation, the co-ordinator met the bank officials and briefed them about the problems of the villages. In continuation to this meeting, the bank convened an official meeting of all the institutions and representatives from the concerned villages and also a few government officials to evolve a development strategy. From the Bank's end, it outlined its role in development process with a specific decision to establish farm clinics in these villages.

Based on the recommendation of the National Commission on Agriculture, the need for providing integrated credit services had been identified by banks and other financial institutions. In order to meet all the requirements of the farmers, particularly of those with small holdings, a farm clinic project had been experimentally initiated in one of the villages of the District. This project was intended to give concrete shape to the concept of integrated credit services for the benefit of the poor families. Encouraged by the success of the first farm clinic, the Bank had organised more than 100 farm clinics by then.

Farm Clinics

The Syndicate Agricultural Foundation, Rural Development Centre and Syndicate Bank sponsored farm clinics were established in the backward villages. Educated youths drawn from the District, specially trained to man these clinics were sent over to the backward villages. These field assistants had been specifically instructed to recognise the overall developmental needs of the villages and act as effective links between the villagers and the institutions responsible for the development work.

During their training at Manipal, the bank headquarters, these field assistants were called to the newspaper office for a briefing about



The field assistants at a training session prior to their assignments in farm clinics in the backward villages.

the role of the media and how they could help in collecting and disseminating information. The MD and the co-ordinator took them round the newspaper office for familiarisation of the newspaper set-up.

A bank official explained the role of the field assistants in the backward villages thus: "be it a request for a road, water, electricity or cattle advance, the assistant will take interest. He will help the villagers in writing letters and follow it up with reminders." Mr. Ramanna Shetty, Managing Director of the Hiryadaka Farmers Service Co-operative Society responsible to monitor farm clinic in *Bellarpady* summed up the clinic activities as follows:

"When the villagers come forward to solve their problems, we are ready to put in any effort and face any challenges. It is always a pleasure to associate with the villagers for their progress."

During the IBVE, the farm clinics were the nucleus of many developmental activities in the villages. In addition to their regular agricultural extension and banking activities, they were also involved in socio-economic life of the villagers.

School Library

Jnana Vikas Yojane: A major finding of the investigations into the problems of the backward villages was the lack of community centres for the villagers' interaction. Many villagers, particularly the educated ones had pointed out the need for a community centre with library and reading room facility. Sensing the enthusiasm of the youth and with a view to encourage and initiate them into village development activities, the newspaper embarked upon a book collection drive for the local schools, under Jnana Vikas Yojane.



The Asst. Headmaster of Didupe School receiving a bundle of books gifted by voluntary associations and local youth to strengthen the school library.

Sparked off by a comment of a youth that liquor centres were the only community centres that the villagers had, the co-ordinator found that in fact liquor shops outnumbered schools in the District.¹⁵ This was one of the reasons for initiating the drive.

15. See Udayavani Page 2 on 29-4-1981.

Under the scheme the newspaper sent an initial contribution of 60 books to all the schools in the backward villages and a few other schools. These books were supplied with a view to encourage the school teacher to motivate the villagers and old students to provide and collect as many books as they could. The newspaper offered to match each additional book with its own contribution. In addition, the MD wrote letters to all leading book publishers and sellers and all the universities in Karnataka about the drive. This brought in a few thousand books for distribution in these villages. By publishing the names of individuals and institutions who donated books, the newspaper provided incentives for participation.

The co-ordinator explained the essence of the drive: "the stress is on local initiative. The intention is to provide a collection of at least 100 books to each of the schools in the backward villages plus another 30 schools that evinced an interest in building up a good library."

By the end of IBVE, backward villages had collected about 6,000 books with *Didupe*, the most backward village of the District claiming the first place with a collection of 1050 books.

The Government :

One of the primary reasons for initiating the IBVE was to monitor and evaluate the impact of numerous rural development schemes by the Government. The involvement by the State Government officials at the Block and the village level in the identification of the backward villages was positive. How did the state government respond to the developmental works in these villages is an important question.

Official developmental works under various heads are carried out by the District administration in co-operation with the Block level officials. After the villages were identified, the Chief Minister of the State and three of his colleagues in the Cabinet who represented the District took particular interest in the development of these villages.

The Chief Minister had sent a communication to the Deputy Commissioner, who was the head of the District Administration, and he in turn had instructed his colleagues at the District and Block levels to attend to the developmental tasks on a priority basis.

Mass contact programmes were conducted by the officials and the concerned people's representatives for the first time in these villages after the newspaper had identified them. The purpose of these

meetings was to identify the problems and take spot decisions (wherever possible) in public. Drinking water, road construction activities, old age and disability pensions and the like covering the gamut of village development activities came under the purview of these meetings. On the request of the Bank, the BDO's initiated socio-economic surveys for identifying the beneficiaries under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

The State Information Minister who represented the constituency presided over a mass contact programme in the most backward village, *Didupe* and was able to take decisions on many outstanding issues. In *Bellarpady*, the BDO, as a first step, sanctioned a Jnana Mandira (a community activity centre) for the village and included it under the IRDP. In Belthangady, the most backward taluka in DK, three villages had been identified under IBVE. The BDO, Mr. Keshav Shenoy, took a keen interest and visited all the villages with the co-ordinator. Later he sanctioned 10 Janata houses, a Panchayat building and implemented many other schemes.

One of the major problems was lack of a suitable road and public transportation. Apart from initiating measures for the speedy completion of the approach roads, the DC, took a major decision



The MLA, Taluk Development Board President, Tahasildar, BDO and other officials of Puttur Taluk trekking towards Alanthaya for the mass contact meeting.

regarding public transportation. As a policy matter the District administration had stopped issuing of new permits for private bus operators. After IBVE began, he announced that new permits would be issued to any private operator willing to extend bus facility to any of the backward villages. Six new permits were issued. Apart from private operators, the State Road Transport Corporation introduced new services connecting two backward villages to the District head quarters, Mangalore.

A descriptive report of the impact of these services on ordinary rural folk is as follows:¹⁶

“Septagenarian, Maila Ajalaya had never dreamt that in his life time, *Mandekolu*, his village, would get a bus service But on September 22, 1981, while in Sullia, the taluk headquarters, he overheard someone mention that a bus had been assigned for Mandekolu and he settled to wait for the bus instead of the usual long walk back home

After hours of waiting, the conductor of a State Transport bus called out to passengers bound for Mandekolu. There were only two passengers for Mandekolu.... Maila and his son.

At the rate of Rs. 1.50 per ticket, a fare of Rs. 3.00 and a hour's journey to Mandekolu.... Maila's joy had no bounds.... Tapping the newly laid road, Maila Ajalaya told the correspondent, 'I need not walk anymore at this age for my spirit worship assignments'.

A report of how actually the bus service came about was also published on the same day:

“....After Mandekolu was identified as a backward village, the villagers approached the Road transport authorities to introduce a bus service to their village....

Can you lay a road....

Yes !

2-3 kms of motorable road was ready by the villagers' voluntary efforts. Thanks to the readiness of driver, a resident of Mandekolu to ply the bus when other drivers refused to drive a bus without knowing the road worthiness, bus service came about....”

16. See Udayavani Supplement on 29-12-1981.



Maila Ajalaya, a septagenarian of Mandekolu proudly claiming that he inaugurated the new bus service to his village.

The scenario was not much different in other villages. But interestingly, many other villages which were not in the backward list also took the cue and got bus services. Extension of bus services to the backward villages had some drawbacks too as in the case of *Bolmane* where the operators took the permit on the pretext of introducing a bus service to a backward village started plying it only upto the village border for commercial reasons.

Though the response by the government officials was generally good, there were a few cases where indifference was glaring. Some observers have pointed out that the response by the Government officials was more due to the fear that the newspaper might publicise their indifference. Even if it was a true case it reiterated a role for the press to act as a watchdog after it had initiated a scheme for the benefit of the villagers. A BDO in fact maintained a grievance file in which he was systematically recording the problems based on the complaints and stories in the newspapers.

The Youth :

The IBVE evoked responses from educational institutions and youth as well. Their important contribution was that the (NSS) activities of some colleges in different talukas were directed and conducted in all the backward villages. These camps in the villages started many developmental activities such as road construction and revival of culture and sports activities. They also provided an insight to the students about the problems of backward villages. Many of these students penned down their experiences and sent them over to the newspaper. Nearly a dozen of these write-ups were edited for clarity etc., and published in the columns as a combined photo-feature. One of the students interviewed for this study recalled his experiences to recount how they were slowly able to overcome the initial non-co-operation and suspicion of the villagers and complete a major stretch of an approach road. During these camps, the boys and girls of NSS conducted socio-economic surveys to help the banks and government officials.



NSS boys and girls interact with the rural youth to lay a new road.

Others :

The coverage in the newspaper included many pictures to go with the text. The natural backdrop of these villages provided plenty of scope for visual representation. *Didupe*, rich in natural beauty provided one such picture of a natural water falls. This photograph attracted the attention of a student from France at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. He contacted the co-ordinator and expressed a desire to try out his design for a mini hydel project in that location as part of his studies. Later he went to the site and initiated his project with the help of his colleagues and co-operation of the State Electricity Board. It was later completed and was a source of electricity for one of the hamlets of *Didupe*.¹⁷

In addition, the publication of the story of suspension bridges in DK in which local initiative and appropriate technology were major inputs, sparked off a chain reaction in many of the villages, including the backward villages for similar initiative. This story has been used in national and international journals as a model developmental story.

A number of voluntary agencies and co-operative institutions focussed their activities in these villages and some of them backed out, while others continued to help and monitor various developmental schemes. Udayavani refused cash donations by a few philanthropists and discouraged adoption of these villages by some of the enthusiastic voluntary groups. This was done deliberately to avoid spoon feeding and making the villagers dependent on outside help.¹⁸

The village and the villagers :

Participation by the villagers was essential for the development process. The villagers had become apathetic to their problems for various reasons including the indifference of the administration. While recognising this apathy, the newspaper did not justify the attitude of the villagers and wanted them to get involved actively for their own good. This was made easy by the publication of the problems and the manner in which the Government and voluntary agencies responded. The visit of numerous officials to their villages, and the establishment of farm clinics rekindled their hopes and community spirits lying dormant. Slowly they started taking an active interest in the overall development of their own villages.

17. Recently the newspaper found out that the power unit has ceased functioning for want of proper maintenance and care.

18. Authors' interview with the MD.



This photograph was often carried by Udayavani along with the stories of the backward villages. There used to be no caption or explanation for this photograph. However, the apt interpretation by many readers was that it symbolised helplessness resulting from a lack of local initiative and desire for change.

The local panchayats which were inactive revived their activities, some of them partially and some other completely. Creation of village development councils, wherever the panchayats did not rise to the occasion was an important development. The villagers, particularly the younger generation, participated in “shramadan” (voluntary work) in road and public building construction activities and school work. Encouraged by the response of different agencies, they became vocal and expressed their problems and aspirations through various forms of representations including letters to the newspaper. It was interesting to note that the copies of their representations to various agencies, officials and elected representative were most of the time marked to the newspaper.

They also revived cultural activities and community celebrations such as “bhajan mandals”, “Ganesha” festivals and “Yakshagana” performances and sports of their liking. The most backward village, *Didupe* organised an agricultural exhibition and taluka level folk sports competition under the aegis of the farm clinic.

Although these activities emphasize the positive contributions of the villagers, it does not mean that there were no problems.

In *Alanthaya* a minor misunderstanding cropped up between two landlords resulting in the emergence of two rival groups in the village. These factions raised a major controversy over the passage of the newly sanctioned road through the village and delayed the road work. During the mass contact programme, this problem was discussed in public and later reported in the newspaper. Consequently, the factions were prepared to patch up their difference and abide by the official decision regarding the controversial stretch of land. By then the money sanctioned for the project had lapsed and they had to wait for the next year's allocation.

In *Manila*, a stretch of land owned by a rich landlord at the outskirts of the village was needed for construction of a bridge to link the road. He did not want to provide this piece of land and contested the claim of the Public Works Department (PWD) in a lower court and lost his case. Before he could appeal against this decision in a higher court, the PWD executed the work.

The BDO of Sullia taluka was sore that the lack of initiative and response by the villagers due to wide-spread factionalism in *Mandekolu* had affected the implementation of many developmental schemes. Not surprisingly, of the 23 schemes sanctioned for this village, only two were implemented and that was pushed through official support.

Elections in Backward villages :

When the general elections for the assembly were announced by the Election Commission in 1983, the authors decided that it was relevant to observe and record the electioneering process in the backward villages. This was done to see the leaders approach and the villagers reaction to them. We found that the candidates who had never bothered to visit these villages in the earlier elections, had visited the villages, in some cases, voluntarily and other cases, to satisfy the villagers' demand. In a couple of cases the sitting legislators had included in their manifesto, some of the efforts they undertook to help the backward villages. The people had become vocal in demanding through memoranda and public meetings, the candidates commitment to the progress of the village and in many cases, the candidates were forced to give an on the spot assurance. After the elections, the elected representatives visited the backward villages without fail.

Over the Years....

In April 1984, after three years, when the experiment was complete, a comprehensive assessment of the developments was made by the newspaper in collaboration with the field assistants and villagers.

Based on the experience of monitoring the developments in the backward villages, the newspaper brought out a double page supplement on the IBVE's success and failures. In addition, the authors sent questionnaires to the field assistants seeking their views and assessment of the progress of the villages and also the role of the newspaper in this process. This chapter highlights the developments.

Three years is too short a period to gauge the long term implications of some of the developments. However, they provide an indication of how development works can be initiated, sustained and in some cases abandoned.

Transportation, medical facilities and educational needs had been identified as the major problems in all the villages. The intensity of these problems varied from village to village and a detailed write-up

Table 4
Impact of IBVE on infrastructural and extension facilities

Village	Farm Clinic	Credit facility	Road	Bus service	Post Office	Tele-phone	Child-care centre	Drinking water	Electricity
Alanhaya	Yes	Yes	incomplete	No	—	Yes	—	—	Yes
Bellarpady	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	—	Yes	—
Bolmane	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Didupe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	New bldg.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Kemtoor	—	Yes	Yes	—	—	—	Yes	—	—
Kudyady	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	New bldg.	No	No	Yes	started
Malachowki	Yes	Yes	New road	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	sanctioned
Mandekolu	Yes	Yes	New road	Yes	existed	Yes	Yes	—	—
Manila	Yes	Yes	New road	Yes	2 PO's	Yes	No	Yes	—
Navoora	Yes	Yes	existed	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	existed

on each of the villages had appeared in the newspaper after the completion of the experiment, in addition to the supplement. Based on the check list of the infrastructural facilities needed for development, the three year achievements were recorded. Table 4 provides a gist of what had happened between 1981 and 1984.

In addition to these developments, there were many other related activities such as establishment of new shops, high schools, adult education centres, construction of foot bridges, mobile health clinics and opening of bank branches and extension counters. These developments should be viewed in the total context of rural development rather than at looking at individual benefits. The newspaper received a number of reactions from readers who indicated that significant developments had not taken place because their individual priorities had not been addressed. The newspaper while publishing these reactions viewed the overall developments in these villages as an important contribution. The newspaper had recognised and maintained that improvements in basic communication facilities could lay the foundation for other developments. From this point of view, substantial improvements had taken place. Where they had not taken place to the desired extent, internal politics and a deliberate lack of desire among the villages to improve their conditions were identified as primary reasons.

Appreciation of the farm clinic concept and through it the realisation of other benefits had helped a majority of the villagers. However, in *Didupe*, the initial euphoria slackened gradually due to the resurgence of the local politics and towards the end development activities were affected.

In contrast, the villagers of *Manila* overcame the initial resistance through rapprochement and understanding among the villages leading to extension of many facilities. In *Alanthaya*, because of the fact that local leaders had patched up their differences, sufficient enthusiasm had generated for development.

The official machinery was particularly activated to redress the problems of the backward villages, notwithstanding some of the usual bureaucratic delays. The villagers admitted that they got a better deal in government officers as soon IBVE began.

The catalytic role of the media did bring about improvements in infrastructure and initiated economic development activities. However, there is no doubt that development goes beyond these areas.

Table 5

Other Developments in Backward Villages

Alanthaya	:	Telephone exchange to nearby village and a tar road to neighbouring village;
Bellarpady	:	Jnana mandira, a grocery shop, medical camp, tailoring school and foundation for a bridge in adjoining village;
Bolmane	:	A telephone exchange in the main hamlet, grocery shop, two hotels and medical camps;
Didupe	:	Four shops, new panchayat building, night school, playground, medical camps and a Syndicate Bank in a nearby village of 8 kms;
Kemtoor	:	Kucha road through voluntary work, renovation of the village temple and school;
Kudyady	:	Expansion of the village school building and medical camps;
Malachowki	:	Permanent foot bridge, grocery, textile and barber shops, hotel, medical camp, a Corporation Bank branch in a nearby village;
Mandekolu	:	Weekly medical facility, two tailoring shops, two shops;
Manila	:	New high school, telephone exchange in a nearby village, medical camp and five shops;
Navoor	:	Telephone exchange, Syndicate Bank branch, grocery and textile shops, 5 kms pucca road and a bridge, new postal building.

The role of the newspaper was to highlight the problems and encourage the people to seek solutions by their involvement coupled with outside help and guidance.

If people do not have an innate desire or restricted by local politics then whatever the newspaper and other agencies do, will have little or no impact.



Nonagenarian Byrajja of the most backward village.

Analysis and Discussion

The novelty of the IBVE and the fact that for the first time a newspaper had initiated and completed a participatory development project has attracted the attention of many scholars in the field. (See Annexure I & III for representative articles). The co-ordinator had received numerous enquiries and requests for details, in addition to invitations to deliver lectures on this experiment. This prompted the authors to document the progress of the experiment from conception to completion. This task coincided with the final visit of the co-ordinator to all these villages and collection of data.

So far we have presented a description of the experiment highlighting the nature of the problem and associated issues. Since the focus of IBVE was on fundamental facilities and improvement of infrastructure at the village level, the scope of this document was limited to an examination of these problems only. Naturally, it does not claim to be an essay on development which is multi-dimensional. With this in view, we have made an attempt to analyse and discuss the IBVE as a unique exercise in development journalism in India.

Mass media cannot be isolated from the institutional context in which they function. The Indian press, particularly the Indian language press has come a long way in having a community orientation towards coverage of issues and events. This shift has not necessarily lead to the press playing a catalytic role in the development process as the coverage is not focussed on a particular region or a set of villages. In addition, the readers involvement is generally restricted to writing a few letters on broad issues and those that affect them directly. This is the scenario in which the IBVE assumes enormous significance for at least three reasons:

- a) a realisation that the media should do something for the development of the region;
- b) conceiving the experiment, its design and implementation within the broader agenda of developmental activities in the region;
- c) involving the readers, officials of development agencies and elected representatives in the identification of the villages and follow-up developmental activities.

Having identified the backward villages, the newspaper clearly understood its role, reach, power, and limitations. The coverage was planned in such a way that by the end of three years the attention would phase down to normal coverage.

Essentially, Udayavani highlighted the problems of backward villages and facilitated the co-ordination of various agencies involved in solving the problems. Wherever there were hurdles to this process, the newspaper focussed on the reasons, irrespective of, whether they were caused by indifference of the officials or the people themselves for political or partisan reasons.

The coverage provided by the newspaper acted as a source of encouragement for individuals and institutions to do a bit of soul searching and implement many schemes. It also brought out the hurdles in the form of local politics and indifference. The coverage focussed more on analysis of the problems and emphasized the achievements, aspirations, and frustrations of ordinary people.

Though only a few villages were identified as backward, Udayavani was well aware that developmental activities for these villages would definitely help many other villages in the vicinity. The increased attention by the official and non-official development agencies to the problems of these villages led to a demand by many

other villages to be identified as “backward”.

This is ironical and peculiar to a developing situation where the demand is more for getting a “backward” status to ensure that resources are allocated.

The IBVE was not an isolated exercise. Udayavani supplemented its coverage on these villages by model stories highlighting the initiative and enterprise of the people in addressing their immediate problems. One such story which generated keen interest in various national and international developmental forums, is the story of suspension bridges in DK. (See Annexure II).

IBVE gave Udayavani an impetus to continue its commitment towards the development of the region. Stories rooted in the villages easily find space in Udayavani on a priority basis. Development journalism is not an experiment anymore but has become integral to the newspaper content and focus.

In 1985, it identified another set of eight villages, one in each of the eight talukas of DK. In 1990, it has taken up similar identification work in the neighbouring districts of Shimoga and North Kanara.

Pressing for Progress

Rather than idly criticising the administration, the Kannada daily Udayavani chose 10 undeveloped villages, charted out a development plan for them and helped to bring them into 20th century.

Manila, unlike its namesake capital of the Philippines, is a little village tucked away amidst the verdant landscape of the western ghats. But the picture postcard tranquillity one senses is deceptive. For, life becomes nightmarish during May–September when torrential rains shatter the peace of hundreds of villages in the Malnad region. The villages are virtually cut off from the outside world during the monsoon. The villagers stoically brave nature's onslaught, stockading themselves within their dwellings with provisions to last out the deluge.

Life becomes as monotonous as the pounding of raindrops on the tiled roofs. All activity comes to a standstill. Not that their plight was any better during the dry season. Access to *Manila* used to be tough — one had to trek it out along the eight km. long dirt-track that connected it to Vittla, the nearest town. Apart from being isolated, the village lacked basic amenities like drinking water and electricity. Things have however changed for the better of late.

The sorry state of the village prompted *Udayavani*, a popular Kannada daily of coastal Karnataka to include *Manila* in its list of ten most backward villages in the district of South Kanara. That was in 1981. However, the tag of being the worst off among the lot went to *Didupe*, a village nestling in solitary splendour on the Charmadi Ghats, cuddled by the Nethravathi river and half a dozen mountain streams.

Three years after the paper highlighted the needs and aspirations of these villages, *Manila* has a brand new asphalt road cut out from the mountainside. In May, a state transport began a two-trip service to the village. Taxis are a regular sight in the village today. Oil tankers bring kerosene to the village, while trucks and tempo vans visit the

village every day to bring essential supplies and to collect the agricultural produce. In *Didupe*, however, only a 10 km stretch of road has been completed and another five km remain.

“With this road, things have changed a lot for us. Our sense of isolation is gone. Suddenly the number of children who go to high school and college has increased because of bus service,” notes Mahabala Bhat, former panchayat president with wonder. Apart from the vital road link, in the three years of the “backward village” project, the village has got a farm clinic, a second post office, six telephone connections, borewells and a teacher who comes to school regularly !

Still the villagers are reluctant to lose the tag bestowed by the newspaper on them which precedes the name *Manila* everytime a report appears in *Udayavani* on the village. “We would like to have the tag for some more time because it gets things done and we have still many requirements,” says the village postmaster Mohammed, who has got a fresh list of demands ready. This includes a bank branch and a primary health centre.

Already the pace of development set by the government has brought in its wake an unexpected blessing. Dr. K. P. L. Bhat, a native of *Manila* who had left the village to practise in Bangalore a decade ago, has returned to his native soil and opened a clinic. “Now that there is a good road, I can visit neighbouring villages and earn a decent sum,” Bhat explains.

The impact of the 36 month old project which ended this summer is felt in the other nine villages, though in varying degrees. Malachowki, in Veerappa Moily’s assembly constituency, again is blessed with a six km road and a bus service. Earlier, the villagers had to cross a little river on a shaky bridge to gain access to the nearest town. Of the 10 villages included in the project, four have got electricity while seven have *anganwadis* (Child Welfare Centres). Bus facility still eludes five villages, while two do not have a post office. *Manila* and *Malachowki* villages have developed rapidly, while some others have been making slow progress.

The newspaper is so enthused with the results of this experiment in development journalism that it has announced a second phase of identifying and focussing attention on another batch of backward villages. It has further launched a new competition for its readers to identify villages and streams which require bridges in a region

where thousands of streams crisscross the landscape. Success of their first project has also evoked interest in other newspapers and voluntary organisations in India and abroad.

Mohandas Pai, the dynamic managing editor of the paper says the newspaper's role was more as a catalyst rather than as an agency of development. "We felt that the community spirit which is lying dormant should be tapped to improve the villages. First requirement was the basic infrastructure. Once communication and education facilities were established individual development and prosperity would follow due to knowledge and accessibility. The project aimed at prodding the lethargic bureaucratic machinery as well as kindling community spirit."

Udayavani was an excellent medium to prod the officials as it is widely circulated in the district and though it is sometimes described as a gazette of local happenings, its sober approach to matters gives it enormous clout. Ishwar Daitota, the newspaper's Bangalore correspondent who has been interested in development was assigned the task of devising a viable project. The paper decided to select 10 of the most backward villages and laid down 10 factors to determine backwardness, primary school, middle school, electricity, post office, telephone, doctors, clinic, water supply, bus service and road link.

A competition was organised for the readers to nominate the most backward village they know of. One condition was that the village should have a population of more than 500. There were 465 replies, nominating 417 villages. Next the paper asked the 15 legislators of the district to select 10 villages without facilities in their constituencies. Then government officials familiar with the villages were asked for details.

After gathering all these details, Daitota began his odyssey seeking the most miserable villages, on his brother's scooter. He logged 1,600 km on the vehicle, another 200 km by bus and trekked for another 100 km. At the end of the search the scooter was fit for the junkyard! Said the scribe-cum-good Samaritan, "I found there was not a single village which missed all the ten facilities. The most serious problem was lack of road link and medical facilities. In every village, good drinking water was not available and what concerned me was that people depended on impure sources. Development was stunted in hilly and forest regions while the villages closer to the sea were more developed." Interestingly, he also noted that the district

had 514 primary schools, while there were 519 toddy shops.

After the search and study of data culled from legislators and officials Daitota gave his vote to *Didupe*, the most inaccessible among the 10. S. K. Das, Deputy Commissioner of the district, issued a circular to his officials to take up developmental work on priority basis in the villages identified by the paper. In addition to the 10, the paper had given 20 more villages as having missed the dubious distinction of backwardness by a whisker.

The Syndicate Bank, which was also founded by *Udayavani*'s founder Dr. T. M. A. Pai (now nationalised), took active part in the project by opening farm clinics in nine of the villages, while the tenth had been adopted by the Vijaya Bank. The clinics which are manned by young extension assistants not only help farmers get loans but educate the members on innovations in agriculture. The paper designated the extension assistants to send reports of every little activity that happened in the village so that bureaucrats were always on the alert. The public works department sanctioned roads and now *Manila*, *Malachowki*, and *Didupe* (partly) have asphalt roads, while *Navoor* had it before 1981. The other six villages have mud roads, soon to be paved with asphalt.

In addition to the ten basic requirements listed by *Udayavani*, the villages have got several other facilities like night schools for adult illiterates, health camps by governmental and voluntary agencies, new buildings for post office and panchayat, and renovation of temples. "These things would have happened even without *Udayavani*. But it would have taken another two or three decades at the current pace. Because government officials are mainly concerned about achieving statistical targets. Take for instance the *Jnana mandirs* (rural libraries). These are meant to be set up at the rate of one per year in every taluk. The influential president or member of the taluk development board will grab it for his village. The really backward villages will have to wait for their turn at the end of the queue. Two km from the heart of Udupi city there are two *Jnana mandirs*," Pai pointed out.

The fruits of the project are many, according to Daitota who kept returning to the villages every few months to chronicle the change. In fact, the project would yield him material enough for a doctoral thesis. Apart from opening up the villages to the outside world, the project has resulted in a new leadership emerging in the

villages. "They have become self-confident and have begun to assert their rights. The sense of helplessness is reduced. Another significant development I have noticed is that professionals are returning to the villages. Apart from the doctor in *Manila*, many others have returned and this is a good sign to arrest the inexorable migration to urban areas".

Apart from publicising the scheme the paper has desisted from contributing anything else for development which now runs to over Rs. 5 crore. "Our aim was to see that the villagers manage things on their own and get their due from the government and other agencies. The old concept of adoption is nothing but spoon feeding which does not inculcate self-reliance," Pai explains. However, the paper offered a scheme to the local schools whereby it promised books to match the schools' collection.

The media attention went a long way in making the project a success. For, in the third year of the project, when the paper refrained from giving any publicity to the villages to gauge the pace of development minus newspaper attention, the authorities slackened off. And more alarmingly, the villagers too lost the initiative. Also, the project could not make much headway in two villages where local political rivalries stymied all efforts.

But Pai is undeterred by these setbacks. He feels the project has done much good on the whole and when it comes to social accountability of newspapers, his organisation has done well.

Sachidananda Murthy

(Sachidananda Murthy is the Bangalore Correspondent of *The Week*, a national weekly. This article was published in *The Week*, in September 1984.)

Annexure – II

Journalism Bridges the Gap

News coverage of the building of a bridge in September, 1979, set in motion a wave of local initiative, co-operation, and appropriate technology in southern India.

Students of the Regional Engineering College in Surathkal, a coastal town in Karnataka, as part of their activities with the National Cadet Corps, built a suspension bridge across a river in a nearby village. *Udayavani*, a popular daily newspaper in Kannada, the local language, and with a circulation of 75,000, carried the news story of the building of the 165 foot bridge at a cost of Rs. 65,000/- (about CA\$ 9000).

The coverage of the engineering college students' success in solving a perennial problem for the villagers by building a low-cost suspension bridge of steel cables and wooden planks attracted the attention of the newspaper's readers.

Udayavani daily, which has the third largest daily circulation in Karnataka State (population 37 million), one of the four south Indian States, mainly caters to readers in the two coastal districts of the area and the four districts in the Western Ghats region of the State. Thousands of villages in this area are cut off by the many rivers and streams that are in spate six months of the year because of heavy rainfall, which averages about 300 cm (120 inches) a year. Building bridges across all these water courses is definitely beyond the resources of the government, and so the locals solve their problem temporarily every year by using country boats and canoes or building risky wooden footbridges at their own cost.

The first news story of the bridge carried in the fall of 1979, with a picture of the span, prompted a chain reaction among the villagers — who learned that a more permanent solution to their transportation difficulties was possible.

Soon stories were coming in regularly about other bridges being built in villages far from the cities: An agriculturist with little secondary education built a rope bridge with the help of the local people; an engineer who had settled in his ancestral farm designed a rope-trolley to cross a river; and a group of local youngsters used a canoe to attach a cable across another stream. The spirit was spreading. *Udayavani*, a newspaper committed to the development



The people's bridge at Andige, which attracted international attention and sparked off similar attempts in many other villages to solve the chronic communication problems.

of the area, did not let the feats go unnoticed. The story of each bridge was published, sometimes the front page, sometimes on the feature page, often with good pictures and briefs about their costs. When the occasional failure took place — a span was not completed or was substandard — that it was reported.

It is almost six years since the paper carried the story about the first bridge, and at least 20 similar bridges have been built in the region since then. *Udayavani*'s development reporter keeps getting letters from unknown villagers inviting him to visit their area, see their new bridge, and report about it. No request is turned down. Inspired by this experience, *Udayavani*'s managing editor announced a new scheme of helping rural people construct suspension bridges. In this connection, a survey in the spring of 1984 was carried out with the help of the readers to identify suitable sites for rope bridges. Over 200 places have been suggested. Details are now being worked out to construct bridges for as many crossings as possible, making the best use of voluntary agencies, government assistance and the local enthusiasm for the project, all of which can be traced back to that first news story.

Ishwar Daitota

(Ishwar Daitota is Udayavani's Bureau Chief in Bangalore. This article was published in IRDC Reports, Canada, 1985.)

Annexure – III

The Eighteenth Elephant

While on his death bed, an aging father called his sons together, according to custom, to tell them how to divide his wealth. Soon after their father's death, the sons gathered to divide their property, primarily their father's seventeen elephants. According to instructions, the eldest son was to receive one-half of the elephants, while the middle son would get one-third, and the youngest one-ninth.

Discovering that one-half of seventeen left him with eight and a half elephants, the eldest son tried to persuade his brothers that he should receive nine elephants. The youngest brother, realizing that one-ninth of seventeen left him with one and four-fifths elephants, argued that, since he was already receiving so little, he should get two elephants.

As the middle son began to plead his case, all three brothers realized that they had reached a deadlock. While they sat and pondered the fate of the last elephant, a wandering nomad came riding into the village on a spectacular elephant, the likes of which none in the village had seen before. "Why do you look so troubled?" he asked. The brothers proceeded to tell him all about their father and his instructions. "The solution is simple," said the nomad dismounting from his beast. "I will give you my elephant."

The sons were hesitant about accepting such a beautiful animal, but before they could refuse, the nomad had put his elephant into the herd with the others. Now there were eighteen elephants. The eldest son took half, giving him nine; the middle son took one-third, giving him six; and youngest got two, one-ninth of eighteen. Seeing that the brothers had got their proper share, the nomad wished them well, mounted his elephant, and rode away. Nine plus six plus two equals seventeen.

Ishwar Daitota, a reporter for the daily *Udayavani* in Kannada, South India, used to recite this story to local villagers when explaining the role of his newspaper in local development issues. "We didn't contribute anything except our writing," he said.

While thousands of development agencies are busy establishing priorities and implementing programmes for their villages, *Udayavani* used the press to make villagers and government officials aware of

village issues, without offering the typical development bandages of ideology and money.

“Our aim,” said Mohandas Pai, Managing Editor of *Udayavani*, “was to see the villagers manage things on their own and get their dues from the government and other agencies. The old concept of adoption is nothing but spoon-feeding, which does not inculcate self-reliance.”

Providing its newspaper as the eighteenth elephant, *Udayavani* reported normal village activity and developments, hoping that the publicity would spark villagers and government officials into making community improvements.

To accomplish this goal, in 1981 *Udayavani* came up with the idea of identifying and reporting on activity in Kannada’s ten most backward villages. “Backwardness” was defined as lack of educational facilities, electricity, post office, telephone, medical services, clean water, and road connections.

Udayavani then asked its readers to provide lists of backward villages and their responses gave the newspaper 417 candidates for the title. After follow-up questioning of local officials narrowed the list, Daitota took to the road via motor scooter, bus, and foot to personally survey the finalists. Having covered more than 2,000 km, Daitota made his choices, awarding the small, isolated village of *Didupe* the honor of “most backward.”

Daitota then began publishing articles on the daily activities or problems of the villages, avoiding coverage of high-level villagers or governmental officials who might have misused the publicity. In all the stories written by Daitota, not once did he recommend a course of action or offer a solution to the villages’ problems.

The response to this low-key approach was enthusiastic. Villages once divided by caste and wealth began to unite to solve their common problems: to construct a new bridge, provide a new road link, or deepen a dried well. Made aware of unkept promises by local governmental officials, villagers also began to demand action from their representatives.

In one particular instance, Daitota traveled to a village in south Kannada to report on the construction of 157 Jantas, one-room government-built shacks, which, according to statistics, had been occupied since 1981. But when he asked about the huts, Daitota’s inquiries met with confused glares of the village elders. After

explaining the government statistics, Daitota was taken to the corresponding units.

“They took me to the land, and there, in the middle of a field, stood 300 wooden poles, but no houses,” recalled Daitota. The ensuing expose not only infuriated the local officials, who were facing re-election, but it also forced the villagers to realize the need for housing and to demand what they had been promised by the government. Following the elections, the jantas became the top priority of the local officials.

Daitota claims that almost 90 per cent of the stories published resulted in either governmental or village action. Many times, village interest groups were formed to tackle other problems in addition to those mentioned in the paper. In all, the ten backward villages established many of the basic facilities they lacked before *Udayavani*’s coverage began.

The tiny village of *Manila*, for example, has cut an asphalt road out of the mountainside to provide it with a vital link to the outside world. In addition, the villagers have welcomed a new farm clinic, a second post office, six telephone connections, several borewells providing clean water, and a teacher who comes to school regularly.

While *Udayavani*’s program has been generally successful, it has met with its share of disappointments, the largest of which was the loss of enthusiasm and initiative once the press coverage stopped. Daitota noted that activity among the villagers and government officials dropped sharply once *Udayavani* had taken away the bright lights.

Despite this drawback, Daitota notes that the changes made in villages were not as temporary as the enthusiasm. The road links, borewells, and schools will continue to benefit the village long after its inhabitants lose their self-improvement drive.

The affects of the program also stretched well beyond the original ten backward villages identified by the paper. In the early stages, Daitota would personally file stories on the timid villagers’ conditions, but today the villagers themselves, throughout Kannada, submit an average of 300 stories a month.

The paper can publish only 30 stories a month. Yet in many cases, when a problem in one village is made public, neighboring villages with similar problems take notice. The impact of publicity spreads well beyond those pictured within the newspaper’s pages.

Udayavani's impact on local villages is more remarkable when one considers that only 53 per cent of Kannada's population is "literate," which the Indian government defines as an ability to read and write one's name. Of course, in the villages themselves, the literacy rate drops much lower. In essence, *Udayavani* is affecting people who cannot even read.

The complimentary copy of the paper provided to each village always includes pictures of village people, causing the villagers to gather and have the corresponding story explained. The front page picture and accompanying story of two dazed, half-naked, illiterate sisters caused such realization, and perhaps embarrassment, that their village united to cloth the girls and, more importantly, to construct a primary school for the village. A few months later the paper published another front page story about the village, this time featuring the fully clothed girls toting school books and beaming with pride.

Developments like these convince the editors of *Udayavani* that their project was worthwhile. *Udayavani* has discovered what many newspapers never realize, that they have a responsibility to their entire community, beyond their daily readers and the high-paying advertisers.

Their method for assisting local development efforts never went beyond the newspaper's means or purpose. No elaborate funding drive, no adopt-a-child program, no scathing editorial, just basic news reporting. It was this disposable tabloid that *Udayavani* offered to the villages of Kannada as their eighteenth elephant.

Mike Ehrhardt

(Mike Ehrhardt, a student of St. Olaf's College, Northfeld, MN, USA, visited India. This article was published in The Manitou Messenger of his college.)

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Ishwar is the bureau chief of Udayavani in Bangalore. A post-graduate in Journalism, he has undergone advanced courses on development journalism organised by the Press Institute of India and Press Foundation of Asia, Manila (Philippines). His special interests are development related issues such as environment, housing, appropriate technology and social policies.

Over the years Ishwar has branched out into other media and has worked extensively for Radio and TV. As a development journalist, he has contributed to many publications. His write-ups in Development Forum, IDRC Reports and Canadian radio have attracted considerable attention. He is a member of board of studies of the Department of Communication and Journalism, Mangalore University and was actively involved in revising the syllabus for undergraduate and post-graduate courses to suit the needs of the media and academic institutions. He has visited Asia, Australia and European countries.

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The Eighteenth Elephant

ಉದಯವಾಣಿ

ಶುಕ್ರವಾರ - 1982

ಶುಕ್ರವಾರ - 1982

ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ 'ಕುಗ್ರಾಮ' ಬೆಕ್ಕಂಗಡಿ ತಾಲೂಕಿನ ದಿಡ್ಡಪು

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಸತ್ ಅಧಿವೇಶನ: ಪ್ರಧಾನಿ ಬೆಂಬಲ

ಪ್ರಧಾನಿ ಇಂದಿರಾ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಅವರು ಸಂಸತ್ ಅಧಿವೇಶನದಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸುವುದಾಗಿ ಘೋಷಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಇವರ ಬೆಂಬಲವು ಸಂಸತ್ ಅಧಿವೇಶನಕ್ಕೆ ಮಹತ್ವದ ಪಾತ್ರವನ್ನು ವಹಿಸಿದೆ.

ಮಹಾಬಲ ಹಗರಣ: ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಕುರಿತಿಯಾದ ಐವತ್ತು ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಮಹಾ

ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಕುರಿತಿಯಾದ ಐವತ್ತು ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಮಹಾ ಹಗರಣವು ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಕಛೇರಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದೆ. ಇದು ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಕುರಿತಿಯಾದ ಐವತ್ತು ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಮಹಾ ಹಗರಣವು.

ತಾರಾಪುರ ಹಿಂದಿನ ತಾಜ್ ಭಾರತಕ್ಕೆ ಸೇರಿದ್ದು: ರಾಮ್

ತಾರಾಪುರ ಹಿಂದಿನ ತಾಜ್ ಭಾರತಕ್ಕೆ ಸೇರಿದ್ದು: ರಾಮ್. ಇದು ತಾರಾಪುರ ಹಿಂದಿನ ತಾಜ್ ಭಾರತಕ್ಕೆ ಸೇರಿದ್ದು: ರಾಮ್.

ಮಹಿಳಾಸೇವಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರದ ಜೊನ್ಸನ್

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಆಮರಣಾಂಕ ನಿರ್ದೇಶನ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಆಮರಣಾಂಕ ನಿರ್ದೇಶನ. ಇದು ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಆಮರಣಾಂಕ ನಿರ್ದೇಶನ.

ಅರ್ಜುನದಿಂದ ಅರ್ಜುನ ಪತ್ರ

ಅರ್ಜುನದಿಂದ ಅರ್ಜುನ ಪತ್ರ. ಇದು ಅರ್ಜುನದಿಂದ ಅರ್ಜುನ ಪತ್ರ.